

STATE OF MINNESOTA

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD

**In the Matter of Xcel Energy's
Application for a Route Permit for a 161
kV High Voltage Transmission Line in
Jackson and Martin Counties, Minnesota**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
SCOPING DECISION
Docket #03-64-TR-XCEL
March 8, 2004**

The above-entitled matter came before the Chair of the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EBB) for a decision on the scope of the Environmental Assessment (EA) to be prepared on the proposed Xcel Energy Lakefield Junction-Fox Lake 161 kV Transmission Line project. The EQB held a public meeting on December 15, 2003, to discuss the project with the public and to solicit input into the scope of the EA to be prepared. The public was given until February 10, 2004 to submit written comments regarding the scope of the EA. Having reviewed the Citizen's Advisory Task Force report, the record in this matter and consulting with EQB staff, I hereby make the following Scoping Order. The EA shall address the following issues.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

In addition to the route proposed by Xcel Energy, the EA shall address alternative routes and route segments (shown in the attached maps and identified in the Citizen Advisory Task Force Report) and described below.

- A. Route option D-4, a route parallel to the existing Alliant 161 kV transmission line connecting the Lakefield Junction Substation and the Fox Lake Substation and using single pole structures capable of double circuiting and without taking the existing Alliant line out of service.
- B. Route option D-5 (Elevator Route), with the flexibility to use the adjacent road(s), to provide Xcel some routing flexibility.
- C. Route option D-1-C through the City of Jackson.
- D. Route option D-1-B through the City of Jackson.
- E. Routing options to accommodate the Split Rock to Lakefield Junction 345 kV transmission line and the proposed 161 kV line and re-routing the Alliant 161 kV line in the Lakefield Junction Substation.
- F. Consolidation of transmission lines, by double circuiting in the Sherburn Substation area.

- G. Other I-90 routing considerations to avoid residences along the freeway.
- H. Underground alternatives in the vicinity of the Jackson Airport.

IMPACTS TO BE EVALUATED

The Environmental Assessment on the Lakefield Junction-Fox Lake 161 kV Transmission Line project will address and provide information on the following matters:

A. GENERAL TRANSMISSION LINE IMPACTS TO BE ANALYZED

1. Purpose of the Transmission Line.
2. Summary of major impacts of the selected route segments on human settlement patterns.
3. Summary of major impacts of the selected segments on local social and economic factors.
4. Summary of major route impacts on local archaeological and historic resources, including Fort Belmont's development and expansion plans.
5. Summary of major route impacts on the environment, rare and unique natural resources.

B. ROUTE SELECTION

1. The processes used to identify and evaluate the route segments.
2. An analysis of the technical and economic feasibility of each alternative route segment considered.
3. List of any alternative route segments considered by the Applicant and discussion of why the final route segments were chosen. The EA will also identify more specifically the impacts associated with routing options in the areas of the Lakefield Junction Substation, the City of Jackson, the Sherburn and Fox Lake Substation area and along I-90 where homes and farms are present.
4. Discussion of any mitigative measures that could be reasonably implemented to eliminate or minimize any adverse impacts for each route segment of the proposed project.
5. Property acquisition procedures for the land where the transmission line may be routed.

C. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

1. Threatened and endangered species and species of concern along the route segments

2. The potential for disruption of critical habitat along the route segments.
3. The location of utility line structures and potential impacts on wetlands.

D. CULTURAL RESOURCES

1. The impacts of proposed route segments on any pre-existing cultural resources and the development and expansion plans of Fort Belmont.

E. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

1. The potential for soil erosion at the transmission line structure sites.
2. The potential for loss of prime farmland due to transmission line structures.

F. HEALTH AND SAFETY

1. The use, location, size, and potential configuration EMF field effects of high voltage transmission lines for the proposed project
2. Current regulatory status of public health risks related to electric and magnetic fields.
3. Emergency preparedness plans for disruption of the transmission line.
4. Potential for radio, television and cell phone interference from transmission lines.

G. LAND

1. Potential property value changes on residential and commercial parcels
2. Cost-benefit of under grounding of transmission lines in residential and commercial areas.
3. Zoning requirements and project compatibility with local land use planning.
4. Transmission line setbacks required from highways, residential areas and the expansion plans of the Jackson Airport.
5. The effects of the new transmission line on existing land uses.

H. NOISE

1. Noise associated with construction of the transmission line.
2. Noise associated with operation of the transmission line.

I. VISUAL IMPACTS AND AESTHETICS

1. Line-of-sight issues and visual impact of the transmission line and related structures

J. SOCIOECONOMICS

1. Construction, operation, and closure effects upon the local economy (jobs, property taxes, change in property values, residential turnover rates) and right-of-way payments.

ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The EQB will not, as part of this environmental review, consider whether a different size or different type of transmission line should be built instead or consider other system alternatives or other voltages. Nor will the EQB consider any route alternative that would require the existing 161 kV Alliant line to be removed from service. Nor will the EQB consider the no-build option.

IDENTIFICATION OF PERMITS

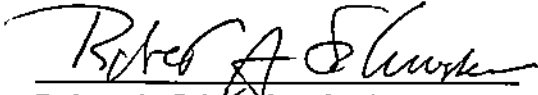
The EA will include a list of permits that will be required for the applicant to construct this project.

SCHEDULE

The EA will be completed by April 23, 2004

Signed this 8th day of March, 2004

STATE OF MINNESOTA
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD


Robert A. Schroeder, Chair

ROUTES PROPOSED

For

EVALUATION IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

For the

Xcel Energy Proposed 161 kV Transmission Line Between

The

Lakefield Junction Substation and the Fox Lake Substation

Xcel Energy Proposed Route.....	Appendix D
Routing Alternatives through the Jackson Area.....	Appendix D-1
Alliant Route.....	Appendix D-4
Farmers Cooperative Route	Appendix D-5



Lakefield Junction to Fox Lake 161kV Line
Xcel Energy
Windfarm Transmission Improvement Projects

